

NEWS RELEASE



United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development

BRIDGING THE LANGUAGE GAP



Nora Gardner moved to Missouri from Mexico five years ago. Two years later she went to work for At Home Mortgage Corporation. Gardner often had lunch at Nancy's, a Neosho restaurant, where she met one of the owners, Enrique Martinez Reyes. Since Reyes speaks Spanish, and so does Nora Gardner, conversation between the two of them drifted to home ownership, and how to obtain a mortgage. Because of Gardner's ability to speak Spanish and English, she was able to guide the hopeful homeowners through the application and loan closing process.

"I try to help a lot of Hispanic people like that", Gardner said. "I can speak both languages, so now I go to all the restaurants and make sure people know who I am. Gardner was presented with a clock in recognition of her assistance in helping procure loans for minorities. during a ceremony at the Reyes new home in Neosho, Missouri.

"That's why we're here today, to thank her for all of her help", said Greg Brnum, State Director for Missouri Rural Development. "This also goes hand in hand with two of President Bush's initiatives that are being pushed very hard: to increase homeownership and to dramatically increase homeownership among minorities".

In the Neosho Local Office that services Barry, McDonald and Newton Counties, last year 209 individuals or families benefited with USDA financial assistance for improving or buying a home.

As part of the celebration of National Home Ownership Month, the Neosho Rural Development office presented a brass door knocker to the Reyes family in recognition of their home purchase through the Agency's guaranteed housing loan program.

Rural Development programs have an excellent track record of building opportunities for home ownership and building stronger communities. By investing in home ownership families can build wealth and open new job opportunities that will spur a generation of new economic activity in rural communities. USDA Rural Development in Missouri joins President Bush in reaching new heights in home ownership in rural America.



Anyone seeking more information on the Rural Housing programs or other USDA Rural Development programs may visit the web site at (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov.mo/>) or by contacting any of our Local Offices.